



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Wetland Habitat Protection and Restoration Program - Phase 3 Laws of Minnesota 2018 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 04/27/2022

Project Title: Wetland Habitat Protection and Restoration Program - Phase 3

Funds Recommended: \$1,786,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2018, Ch. 208, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd 4(d)

Appropriation Language: \$1,786,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Minnesota Land Trust to acquire permanent conservation easements and to restore and enhance prairie, wetland, and other habitat in high-priority wetland habitat complexes in the prairie and forest/prairie transition regions. Of this amount, up to \$240,000 is to establish a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. A list of proposed conservation easement acquisitions and restorations and enhancements must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Wayne Ostlie

Title: Director of Land Protection

Organization: Minnesota Land Trust

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Location Information

County Location(s): Pope, Big Stone, Otter Tail, , Swift, Douglas, Grant and Stearns.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Restore
- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie
- Forest
- Habitat

Narrative

Abstract

Phase 3 of the Wetland Habitat Protection and Restoration Program, will result in the protection of 646 acres of high priority wetland habitat complexes in Minnesota's Prairie and Forest-Prairie Transition areas by securing permanent conservation easements within scientifically prioritized habitat complexes. The Minnesota Land Trust will use its innovative landowner bid model to maximize conservation benefit and financial leverage in protection project selection. In addition, an expanding partnership between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Land Trust will restore/enhance 745 acres of wetlands and associated prairies to benefit important waterfowl and SGCN populations.

Design and Scope of Work

Wetlands and shallow lakes provide the essential backbone for the survival of waterfowl and other important wildlife species. In fact, more than 50% of Minnesota's Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) use wetlands during their life cycle. Most of the plans developed to protect Minnesota's wildlife—including Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan, and the Long Range Duck Recovery Plan—cite the protection and restoration of the state's remaining wetlands as one of the top priorities to achieve the State's conservation goals. Moreover, these plans cite the use of conservation easements on private lands as one of the primary strategies to protect important wetland and shallow lake habitat.

Minnesota Land Trust's Wetlands Habitat Protection Program area extends from Meeker northwest to Becker County, located along a vast glacial moraine system at the edge of the of western Minnesota. This prairie pothole country is the core of Minnesota's "duck factory" and is central to one of North America's most important flyways for migratory waterfowl. Through Phases 1 and 2 of this program, the Land Trust has procured 10 conservation easements protecting nearly 1,800 acres of habitat and 70,000 feet of shoreline, with more on the way.

Phase 3 will build on these accomplishments by broadening the Program's focus to include – along with wetland protection – habitat restoration and enhancement. Through a partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the Land Trust will restore/enhance 745 acres of important prairie and wetland habitat on private lands already protected within the Program area. In addition, the Land Trust will protect 646 acres of new priority wetland and associated upland habitat through conservation easements. The Program will be closely coordinated with other public agencies, non-profit organizations and other stakeholders to ensure this Program meets multi-agency conservation goals.

The Land Trust will continue to implement a criteria-based ranking system and market approach for purchasing conservation easements. The Program will continue to target projects that help complete gaps in existing public ownership, are of the highest ecological value, and provide the greatest leverage to the state. The Land Trust will seek donated easements in these areas whenever possible but also may purchase easements that help complete key complexes as necessary.

To focus our easement protection work, we used the Prairie Plan and other data sets and plans to shape our Wetlands Program plan and identify important wetland complexes in this landscape based on the intersection of high-quality habitat, existing protected areas and restorable agricultural lands. These complexes include a mosaic of wetland, prairie/grassland, and forest habitats, as well as agricultural land. Outcomes from this project include: 1) healthy wetland habitat complexes and associated populations of waterfowl, upland birds, and SGCN; 2) improved water quality; 3) increased participation of private landowners in habitat conservation projects; and 3) enhancement of prior public investment in wetland and upland habitat protection.

How does the plan address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species?

Minnesota's wetlands are essential to our wildlife health and diversity. This project directly benefits Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and other important game and non-game wildlife species by minimizing the potential threats to their habitat brought about by detrimental agricultural practices, residential or commercial development or imprudent land management. The wetland habitat complexes that will be targeted through the ranking system will include a mosaic of wetlands, grasslands and woodlands. Priority projects will include high or outstanding habitat as identified in Minnesota Biological Survey data. They will also be located near other protected lands so as to help build larger habitat complexes which will be comprised of both public and private lands. In fact, with the vast majority of this landscape in private ownership, working with private owners on land protection strategies is key to successful conservation in this region. Finally, we will work closely with partners in the region to identify those habitat complexes where private land protection can make a significant contribution to existing conservation investments.

This program addresses LSOHC priorities by protecting shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for Minnesota's wildlife, especially its migratory waterfowl and associated species.

Describe how the plan uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:

This program is focused on procuring easements and restoring prairie and wetland habitats on easement lands within priority complexes of wetlands and associated upland habitats, as guided by the State Wildlife Action Plan, Duck Plan and Prairie Plan. Specific parcels available for acquisition of easements are further reviewed relative to each other to identify priorities among the pool of applicants. This relative ranking is based on three primary ecological factors (amount of habitat on the parcel (size) and abundance of SGCN; the quality or condition of

habitat; and the parcel's context relative to other natural habitats and protected areas) and cost. As such, the program serves to build upon past conservation investments in the program area, expanding the footprint of existing protected areas (WMAs, WPAs, etc.), facilitating the protection of habitat corridors and reducing the potential for fragmentation of existing habitats. In addition, our partnership with USFWS will enable us to further reduce effects of fragmentation through restoration of prairie, wetlands and other habitats. Minnesota Biological Survey data is a cornerstone to our assessment of potential conservation easement acquisitions; we also conduct field visits to further identify and assess condition of habitats prior to easement acquisition, as many private lands were not formally assessed through MBS.

Which two sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are most applicable to this project?

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Forest / Prairie Transition

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

Prairie

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

Does this program include leveraged funding?

-

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2001-2011	ENRTF	2,000,000
2014-2017	McKnight Foundation	240,000

How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

The land protected through conservation easements will be sustained through state-of-the-art standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship. The Minnesota Land Trust is a nationally-accredited land trust with a very successful stewardship program that includes annual property monitoring, effective records management, addressing inquiries and interpretations, tracking changes in ownership, investigating potential violations and defending the easement in case of a true violation. Funding for these easement stewardship activities is included in the project budget.

In addition, MLT will assist landowners in the development of comprehensive habitat management plans to help

ensure that the land will be managed for its wildlife and water quality benefits. USFWS and MLT (as easement holders on respective properties) will work with landowners in an ongoing basis to provide habitat restoration plans, resources and technical expertise to undertake restoration, enhancement and ongoing management of these properties.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2022 and in perpetuity	MLT Long-Term Stewardship and Enforcement Fund	Annual monitoring of conservation easements in perpetuity	Enforcement as necessary	-
Every 4-6 years	USFWS, Landowner, MLT	Prescribed fire, tree control, invasive species control	-	-

Activity Details

Requirements

If funded, this program will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056?

Yes

Is the land you plan to acquire (easement) free of any other permanent protection?

Yes

Who will manage the easement?

The Minnesota Land Trust will manage the easement.

Who will be the easement holder?

The Minnesota Land Trust will hold the easement.

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program?

Yes

Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, Subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- Permanently Protected Conservation Easements

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program?

Yes

Explain what will be planted:

Easement Acquisition:

The purpose of the Minnesota Land Trust's conservation easements is to protect existing high quality natural habitat and to preserve opportunities for future restoration. As such, we restrict any agricultural lands and use on the properties. In cases in which there are agricultural lands associated with the larger

property, we will either carve the agricultural area out of the conservation easement, or in some limited cases, we may include a small percentage of agricultural lands if it is not feasible to carve those areas out. In such cases, however, we will not use OHF funds to pay the landowners for that portion of the conservation easement.

Restoration/Enhancement:

Short-term use of agricultural crops is an accepted best practice for preparing a site for prairie restoration. For example, short-term use of soybeans could be used for restorations in order to control weed seedbeds prior to prairie planting. In some cases this necessitates the use of GMO treated products to facilitate herbicide use in order to control weeds present in the seedbank.

Are any of the crop types planted GMO treated?

True

Will the eased land be open for public use?

No

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?

Yes

Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:

Most conservation easements are established on private lands, many of which have driveways, field roads and trails located on them. Often, these established trails and roads are permitted in the terms of the easement and can be maintained for personal use if their use does not significantly impact the conservation values of the property. Creation of new roads/trails or expansion of existing ones is typically not allowed.

Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition?

Yes

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

Existing trails and roads are identified in the project baseline report and will be monitored annually as part of the Land Trust's stewardship and enforcement protocols. Maintenance of permitted roads/trails in line with the terms of the easement will be the responsibility of the landowner.

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition?

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Conservation easements completed or options secured.	June 30, 2022
Restoration and enhancement projects completed	June 30, 2023

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2023

Budget

Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan.

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$222,000	\$11,600	USFWS Staff	\$233,600
Contracts	\$399,900	-	-	\$399,900
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$846,200	\$223,500	Private landowner donation of easement value	\$1,069,700
Easement Stewardship	\$120,000	-	-	\$120,000
Travel	\$11,700	-	-	\$11,700
Professional Services	\$78,000	-	-	\$78,000
Direct Support Services	\$61,400	-	-	\$61,400
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$46,800	-	-	\$46,800
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,786,000	\$235,100	-	\$2,021,100

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Land Trust Protection Staff (Program Manager, Legal, Director of Land Protection, etc.)	0.53	3.0	\$155,000	-	-	\$155,000
Land Trust Restoration Staff (Program Manager, etc.)	0.3	3.0	\$67,000	\$11,600	USFWS Staff	\$78,600

Amount of Request: \$1,786,000

Amount of Leverage: \$235,100

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 13.16%

DSS + Personnel: \$283,400

As a % of the total request: 15.87%

Easement Stewardship: \$120,000

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 14.18%

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?

The deliverables of the program were reduced proportional to the amount of funding recommended by LSOHC.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

We provide a conservative estimate (\$223,500) - under Easement Acquisition - of landowner donative value we expect to be put forward by those participating in the program. In addition, the USFWS has committed in-kind staff contributions totaling \$11,600 for restoration/enhancement project engineering and design.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

5/22/19: \$250,000 of the total funding in the contract line (\$307,000) is for restoration & enhancement contracts & \$57,000 is for protection contracts such as habitat management plans & outreach by SWCDs.

Easement Stewardship

What is the number of easements anticipated, cost per easement for stewardship, and explain how that amount is calculated?

Travel

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?

-

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging

I understand and agree that lodging, meals, and mileage must comply with the current MMB Commissioner Plan:

No

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

In a process that was approved by the DNR on March 17, 2017, Minnesota Land Trust determined our direct support services rate to include all of the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget, which is similar to the Land Trust's proposed federal indirect rate. We will apply this DNR-approved rate only to personnel expenses to determine the total amount of direct support services.

Federal Funds

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?

No

Output Tables**Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	28	60	0	367	455
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	646	646
Enhance	0	40	0	250	290
Total	28	100	0	1,263	1,391

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	\$37,400	\$27,400	-	\$338,700	\$403,500
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$1,287,900	\$1,287,900
Enhance	-	\$12,400	-	\$82,200	\$94,600
Total	\$37,400	\$39,800	-	\$1,708,800	\$1,786,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	0	180	0	275	0	455
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	300	0	346	0	646
Enhance	0	40	0	250	0	290
Total	0	520	0	871	0	1,391

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	\$170,500	-	\$233,000	-	\$403,500
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	\$687,900	-	\$600,000	-	\$1,287,900
Enhance	-	\$12,400	-	\$82,200	-	\$94,600
Total	-	\$870,800	-	\$915,200	-	\$1,786,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	\$1,335	\$456	-	\$922
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$1,993
Enhance	-	\$310	-	\$328

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	\$947	-	\$847	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-

Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	\$2,293	-	\$1,734	-
Enhance	-	\$310	-	\$328	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Wetland and upland complexes will consist of native prairies, restored prairies, quality grasslands, and restored shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *This program will permanently protect 646 acres of wetland and upland habitat complexes and restore/enhance 745 acres of wetlands and prairies in the forest-prairie transition region. Measure: Acres protected; acres restored; acres enhanced.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species ~ *This program will permanently protect 646 acres of wetland and upland habitat complexes and restore/enhance 745 acres of wetlands and prairies in the prairie region. Measure: Acres protected; acres restored; acres enhanced.*

Parcels

For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

[Yes](#)

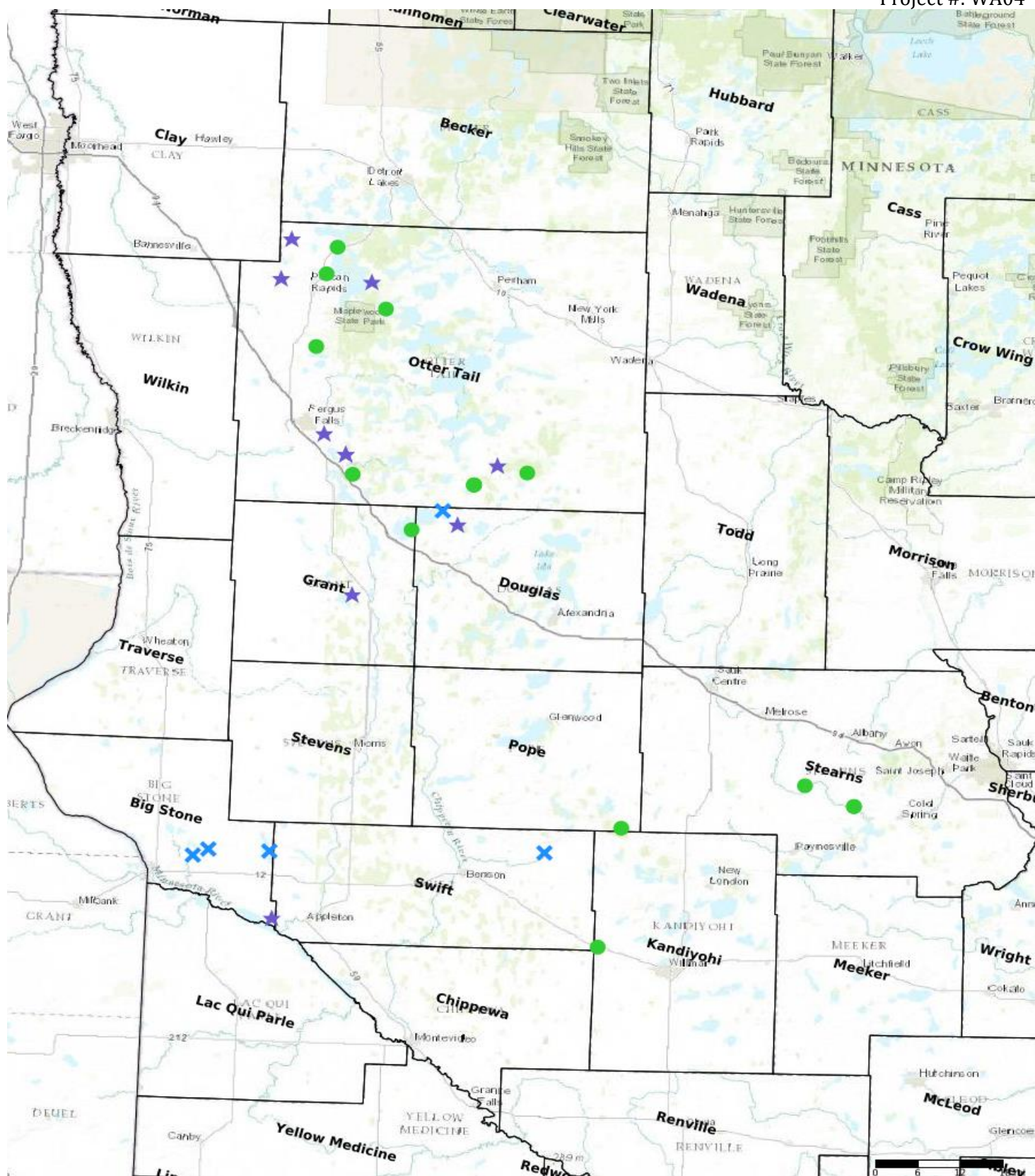
Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
HFarms et al	Big Stone	12245227	136	\$42,890	Yes
Sit (W3)	Big Stone	12245232	134	\$13,290	Yes
HD/R	Big Stone	12244225	69	\$10,455	Yes
GLil	Douglas	13040203	40	\$10,000	Yes
MOls	Douglas	13040213	80	\$50,000	Yes
ILue	Grant	12842210	100	\$100,000	Yes
JOle	Otter Tail	13239235	10	\$7,500	Yes
BStef	Otter Tail	13743217	160	\$80,000	Yes
WVal #2	Otter Tail	13242228	3	\$5,000	Yes
WVal	Otter Tail	13242228	80	\$40,000	Yes
CSha	Otter Tail	13644213	80	\$50,000	Yes
DHes	Otter Tail	13243212	10	\$10,000	Yes
DKlu	Otter Tail	13642213	5	\$7,500	Yes
GStr	Swift	12238224	100	\$13,290	Yes
CVac	-	12044213	65	\$22,000	Yes

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Lake Christina (Johnson)	Grant	13041224	39	\$119,500	No
Spitzer Lake 2	Otter Tail	13139217	40	\$60,000	No
Pelican Lake (Pelican River Land Company, LLC)	Otter Tail	13742220	165	\$0	No
Minnesota Woman (Peterson)	Otter Tail	13643212	314	\$447,500	No
Long Lake	Otter Tail	13443202	300	\$450,000	No
Dead Lake	Otter Tail	13541205	298	\$680,000	No
Perch Lake	Otter Tail	13138204	285	\$370,000	No
Pomme de Terre River (Evavold)	Otter Tail	13142210	73	\$117,000	No
Spitzer Lake 3	Otter Tail	13139217	59	\$55,000	No
Spitzer Lake 3	Otter Tail	13139217	59	\$55,000	No
Lake Johanna 2	Pope	12036231	130	\$150,000	No
Rocky Mountain Lake (Rocky Mountain Sportsmen, Inc.)	Pope	12336234	75	\$132,000	No
Sauk River 3	Stearns	12331210	78	\$110,000	No
Sauk River 5	Stearns	12432227	43	\$40,000	No
Sauk River 4	Stearns	12331210	37	\$40,000	No



- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- ⊕ Other

Parcel Map
Wetland Habitat Protection and Restoration
Program - Phase 3
(Data Generated From Parcel List)

